1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

new element is however not of major importance; although religious titles are used in civil life no other distinction is made between layman and lamas; the social organisation is confined to the monastery. There is a difference in appearance between laymen and lamas; laymen wear their hair in a long plait whereas lamas have their heads shaved or at least close cropped; and though lamas often wear ordinary clothes for field work, on social occasions they always wear Tibetan, and not Lepcha dress. But lamas do not form a group within the society; the fact that a man is a lama is only one of the aspects of his personality, less important than his wealth or poverty, his industry or laziness, his relations by kin and marriage and friendship with other people. Only in their death are lamas given distinguishing treatment; they are usually cremated and never buried, whereas laymen are usually buried and never cremated; both laymen and lamas may, if the horoscope indicates it, be thrown into the river.

As a generalisation it may be said that the Lepchas have accepted the ritual, the validating mythology, and the organisation of lamaism; what they have completely refused to accept is the ethic. Like the other 'higher religions' lamaism is individualist; it holds that a person's chief concern should be with his own spiritual welfare. This, the key-concept of lamaism, was and is an alien attitude to the Lepchas. As has already been said, the Lepcha attitude to disapproved-of acts is social, and not individual; it is the society, and not the evil-doer, which bears the brunt of wicked acts. The Lepchas admit feelings of shame—feelings so strong that they can lead to suicide—following exteriorised social disapproval; they do not admit guilt-feelings. The more pious lamas and some laymen accept intellectually the idea of reincarnation, but they do not accept emotionally the idea of reincarnation being the result of personal acts. The form of reincarnation is discovered from horoscopes, and those depend on the time of birth or death, that is to say on chance, and not on individual behaviour. Sin is practically equated with the killing of animals; this is felt to be a dangerous act and is thoroughly congruent with the Lepchas' inhibition of aggression in other spheres of life. But the idea of asceticism, for example, being meritorious is so alien to the Lepchas, that even pious lamas have confided their private belief that the *gé-long* (as the monks who have taken their vows of asceticism are called) get their satisfactions on the sly.

I should like to suggest that this selective conversion to a new

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a scene from their own past they describe it minutely and statically, as though they were looking at a picture. They frequently like to make their descriptions clearer by employing twigs or pebbles to represent the people and things described.

It is probable that the value which is placed on story-telling has greatly influenced the Lepcha tendency to monologue, to talk as it were in paragraphs, to which I have already referred; this tendency is noticeable even in the speeches put into the mouths of the characters of their stories. Stichomythia is only applied to jokes.

v

Besides being the greatest social diversion, speech is also the greatest social sanction. For through speech is produced the strongest unpleasant psychological sensation that the Lepchas recognise—shame; and shame is on occasion so unbearable that it leads to suicide.

The training and education of Lepchas from their earliest childhood stresses social approval and disapproval as the motive for adopting or abstaining from certain types of behaviour. A child is told that if he does certain acts—takes other people's property for example, or refuses to work—other people won't like him and won't help him. The emphasis is always on the disapproval of the community in general and not, as with us, on the losing the love of the parents, or the gods, or on the punishment by people in authority. It would seem (though without further evidence this is only a speculation) that this emphasis on anonymous social approval together with the fact that the extended family is a psychologically operative group, and that positive training takes place relatively late in the life of the child, has the result of producing a much weaker internalised control (or super-ego) than is the case when the approving and punishing mechanism is introjected in the image of the parents and parent-surrogates. It is also noteworthy that the Lepcha social organisation only renders possible identification with the community as a whole, and, though to a lesser extent, with the extended family; the Lepchas have not, as most European children and adults have, smaller groups in the community with whom they can identify, and whose approval will support them against the condemnation of another part of the community.

If this is an accurate representation of the case it would follow

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actually endangering his life.[6] One of the reasons for believing in the guilt of Hlatam the 'poisoner' was that both she and her son Aga must have been aware of what was said about them and neither had demonstrated their innocence by attempting to kill themselves.

Verbal threats of suicide are occasionally made, but they are taken little notice of. When they are drunk Dunbi, because he is poor, and Katel, because his second wife won't sleep with him, threaten to kill themselves. Children also occasionally threaten to kill themselves if they think they are unjustly scolded or ill-treated; when he was young Pembu, an exceptionally nervous man, used to make such threats, and Chano's younger son, who was brought up by an 'aunt' also does so occasionally; to such threats the parents retort that nobody wants such a naughty child.[7]

With this ever-present possibility of provoking shame and even suicide it can be seen that malicious gossip and scandal assume very considerable emotional importance. People are worried as to what their neighbours are saying about them behind their backs; one or two even said that the reason for having '*ingzong*' (special friends) in one's own village was so that if people spoke ill of you you would have somebody whom you can completely trust to tell you what is being said. My impression is that very little scandal is spoken, and that when people did discuss potentially scandalous or disagreeable situations they did so very seriously and with hushed voices, taking care that no children or ignorant neighbours should listen to what they were saying.

The potential influence of hostile talk has I think further results: it is a very strong sanction to encourage Lepchas to conform to the approved methods of behaviour; and it also makes people chary of expressing judgements about their neighbours. If you ask a Lepcha who in his village has any outstanding quality, whether good or bad, he will almost certainly reply that everybody is much of a muchness. In many ways I think this does represent the real Lepcha attitude; affection is based on mutual services, not on emotion, and consequently difference in character is of much less importance than difference of treatment. Only character traits strongly opposed to Lepcha ideals were spontaneously commented on, and those seldom; cruelty, avarice, untruthfulness,

[6] For an example of this see the story of the attempted suicide of Jiroong's sister in Chapter Sixteen, p. 428.

[7] See also the history of Chélé's threats of suicide; Chapter Six, pp. 164–165.

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quarrelsomeness were on the whole justly ascribed to those people who manifested these qualities; but I could never get people to allot differences in socially valuable qualities, to say for example that A. was a better or worse worker than B. or more or less generous.

I think that I was more conscious in the difference in the characters of the various Lepchas of Lingthem than the Lepchas themselves were; as a member of my culture I naturally judged people emotionally and liked or disliked them for differences of character rather than for their behaviour towards me. Towards the end of my stay I found that I had taken a really firm dislike to some people, particularly to Aga and Katel, whom I considered mean and sly and altogether unpleasant. Aga was fairly generally disliked, but when I told the people I was intimate with that I disliked Katel they obviously could not understand my reasons: he had not treated me badly in any way. When I tried to explain more fully my reasons for disliking him they would explain that he was foolish and did not know how to behave properly. For them this was a sufficient explanation; it wasn't his fault he was a fool and this was no reason for disliking him, provided he fulfilled his obligations. In the same way although lame orphaned Satéo through his clumsiness and incompetence always botched whatever work he was doing, nobody thought of reproving him or preventing him joining in the communal work—he was a liability on any job—because he was patently doing his best and couldn't help his clumsiness. If on the other hand he had been an able-bodied man who through laziness or spite was doing bad work he would undoubtedly be reprimanded and publicly shamed.

Lepchas are very unwilling to speculate on the motives of another's behaviour, whether in the past or present; they always turned aside such questions with the catch phrase 'Who can see into the heart of another?'

vi

Although it is difficult and of questionable value to try to describe the intellectual and temperamental characteristics of the average Lepcha it is perhaps worth while to point out some of their more pronounced group attitudes. The Lepchas possess remarkably vivid and exact verbal and visual memories. They do not prize intellectual quickness and it is on the whole not one of their characteristics. Numbers are practically meaningless to them and

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and isolating irrelevant and unintegrated attitudes comes I think from indifference and not from scepticism. A comparison might be found in the way Occidentals under the orders of doctors will accept temporary but profound modifications of their habits or diet without considering that their former habits were wrong or that others should follow them; they give up meat for example because the doctor says that for the moment it will disagree with them, not because they have become convinced vegetarians. The Lepchas are not sceptical about various methods of dealing with the supernatural, but their belief has no intensity or rigidity. It is possible that before their conversion to lamaism the Lepchas felt more strongly that they possessed the only correct way of dealing with the supernatural; but now that they have accepted the idea that there are two alternative methods for dealing with nearly every devil they can accept without difficulty further alien methods founded on similar hypotheses. It is worth remembering also that religious rituals are only performed by a very small part of the population—by the lamas and Mun; the lay population merely summon them when they think they need their services and provide the raw materials from which the lamas will fashion the religious objects. The vast majority of Lepchas never perform any religious rites (beyond perhaps turning a prayer wheel and prostrating themselves before the lamaist images); religion with the Lepchas is the occupation of a minority of specialists.

Within limits the Lepchas are also extremely tolerant of individual variations in temperament. They are adamant in resisting any encroachment on their individual and group independence, and they will not permit overt aggression or ambition, or the sidestepping of communal duties; but provided a person fulfils his private and public obligations, keeps the peace, and does not seek to impose on or exploit others, or to go counter to the rules of the society, he is permitted considerable latitude. The Lepchas insist on very considerable social conformity; but if an individual carries out his social obligations adequately and does not seek to interfere with or destroy the privacy and independence of others, others will also respect his privacy and independence. The Lepchas so dislike being ordered about, that even on construction jobs which could be quicker and more efficiently performed with a director of operations, they insist on working independently, and appear to ignore anybody who tries to give orders.

This antithetic emphasis on social conformity and individualism

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produces the result that most Lepchas have two types of behaviour; they are far more restrained in public and with strangers than they are in the privacy of their own homes. I was naturally never able to observe this, but in people's stories of their own lives there was a constant undercurrent of grumbling and scolding, particularly on the part of the women.[8] Sometimes these undercurrents came fairly near the surface in public in the guise of playful teasing. Public quarrelling of any sort is so violently disapproved of that even minor irritations and annoyances have to be repressed in public; in the home there is not the same social restraint and I have the impression that the majority of wives are given to nagging on occasion. It must be remembered that most wives are strangers to their husband's community and therefore lack the moral and emotional support of their families which is always available for the majority of the men.

The pace of Lepcha life is very leisurely; the Lepchas are never in a hurry. When they are doing something, be it work or pleasure, they like to do it thoroughly. With work as with pleasure there is no hurry or greed; everything gets done eventually, but it gets done slowly, with intervals of rest in between. The Lepchas never seem to mind waiting; often after everybody has gathered for a religious ceremony there will be a delay of several hours, while the lamas prepare the ritual objects; nobody objects to this or tries to hurry another up; they are content to sit and wait until everything is ready. When a piece of communal work such as the repairing of a house or the building of a bridge is in progress only about half the people present are likely to be working at any one time; the others will be taking a rest, or joking, or helping to prepare the evening meal. The Lepchas work very long hours and do not grudge their labour; but they detest being ordered about and see no sense in hurry; work is a disagreeable necessity which should be made as pleasant as possible. A few state that they feel happiest after a good day's work; but for the majority the reason for work is to provide for the sensual pleasures which form the chief object of life.

Although Lepchas do not allow for quarrelling they admit bad temper to be natural, particularly if a person is hungry or if he is finding difficulties in his work. The expression of bad temper is stylised; it is called *shadong ding* and is externalised by the annoyed person breaking any of his own property which comes to hand, or

[8] Numerous examples of this occur in Book Three.

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

by his hacking at a piece of wood with his knife, or by throwing stones. Even in this state nobody would destroy another's property, and only a savage foreigner like Tempa would hit or throw stones at people; but on occasion people might hit animals, or throw things at them. Normally people only beat animals if they stray into cultivated land; to hit them on any other occasion is considered cruel. *Shadong ding* is considered to be a natural and almost automatic state, like hunger; it is not caused by a supernatural and no notice is paid to a person in a temper.

Except for shame, hunger and sexual desire the Lepchas do not equate physical sensations and emotional states. Neither blushing nor fainting for emotional reasons are recognised. Squeamishness varies considerably with the individual. Some people are frightened of corpses; the Mandal was unwilling to approach the dead bodies of his first wife and of his parents. A few, such as Pembu, cannot even bear to watch a wound being dressed. Such squeamishness is considered rather stupid; and a certain admiration is expressed for those people who have the courage to rip open the corpse of a pregnant woman, and take out the foetus, which has to be done before the body is disposed of. A queasy person is not made fun of nor considered disgraced by his sensitiveness; but some admiration is felt for those people who do not manifest it, rather similar to the European admiration for a person with 'plenty of guts'.

The disgust reactions of the Lepchas are remarkably low. They will not avoid walking in human or animal excrement and will merely rub their feet on the grass if they should do so. People will clean babies often with their bare hands; and I have seen women collect the mucus from a baby with whooping cough in their hands and just rub them on the ground. They have no disgust for menstruation though they have some fear of it; if the menstrual blood falls into food or water it would be fatal to humans or animals though it nourishes fishes; a menstruating woman is not debarred from any action. After menstruation a woman will always wash both her body and her clothes, a thing which Tibetans neglect to do; the Lepchas consider, and correctly, that the Tibetans are far dirtier than they, and a number of anecdotes are told about the Tibetan lack of attention to their bodies and their various filthy, but to the Lepchas amusing, personal habits. The Lepchas themselves are extremely dirty on the whole and particularly the laymen; lamas shave and wash their heads and also their hands before making

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

By the time a Lepcha baby is three it is already a recognisable member of its society, and the vast majority have the warm, sensuous, and fundamentally optimistic character which is typical of the Lepchas in later life. The child has an almost complete reliance on all the older members of its group; it has been trained physically and mentally to yield to its elders, who in their turn will gratify as quickly as possible all its expressed wishes. It has come to expect from the rest of the society a rather negligent and impersonal but consistent kindness; unpleasant sensations, and especially hunger, have been reduced to a minimum. Except under extraordinary circumstances a child is never alone nor is it allowed to cry without receiving attention. The training in cleanliness is not given any strong emotional importance, nor are any bodily functions in any way a subject for embarrassment or shocked shame; the impetus to restraint is chiefly social approval. The child receives very early a notion of fear from the voices and expressions of those around him; these fears are soon centred round certain words—devils, bears, tigers, snakes, Tibetans, strangers. But except for the accident of death, an unweaned child is unlikely to have undergone any obviously traumatic experience; the usually delayed weaning and birth of a younger sibling is likely to be the first really frightening experience. To my mind the chief formative influences in the earliest years of the life of a Lepcha child are firstly continuous physical satisfaction, secondly the learning of passivity, thirdly the impersonal attitude of the majority of parents, and finally the looking to elder siblings as much as, and even more than, to the parents for attention and help. The relying on elder siblings as though they were parents is certainly a major force in adult life. It is, I think, the habits and memories of this prolonged and satisfactory infancy which support the children through the less pleasant educative years of later childhood.

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iv

In Lepcha an infant in arms is called *ing-ha*, a child that can walk *a-kup*. The word *ing-ha* is only used in this connection, but the word *a-kup* can be used as a suffix to any noun to indicate that the thing referred to is smaller than usual; a *ban kup* is a little knife, a *li kup* a little house. I think this linguistic point is of importance, as an indication of the attitude held by Lepchas towards children: they are *little adults*, and as such bound by adult rules; they are not,

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CHAPTER FOURTEEN

DEVIANTS AND DEFECTIVES

i

Except when I have used individual illustrations the four chapters of Book Two have been written about an abstraction called 'the average Lepcha'. Of course such an abstraction has no more real existence than 'the average man' or 'the man in the street' dear to European and American journalists; he is a compromise between the ideal personality set up for the Lepchas by themselves and the observable behaviour of the majority of the Lepchas in Lingthem. It is the Lepcha stereotype who has been described.

The Lepcha stereotype is unaggressive, sociable, hard-working, constantly good-humoured, greatly interested in direct consumption (eating, drinking and copulation), fundamentally optimistic. The relationship of the Lepcha stereotype with his fellows is based rationally on mutual benefits and obligations; very little stress is placed on personal affection and practically no interest is taken in, and no allowance made for, individual character or temperament. The Lepcha insists very firmly on the independence of the adult individual and the family group; no attempt is made to dominate or exploit others, and any attempt by others to dominate or exploit is resisted as actively as the rules of the culture permit. The Lepcha identifies himself strongly with his family group and with his immediate community—the village; the identification with the tribe as a whole is much less strong, and one of the Lepchas' chief social weaknesses is that, except in the case of serious crime, the Mandal and inhabitants of one village have little influence over the inhabitants of any other village under a different Mandal. The Lepcha stereotype calls for a very gradual emergence of responsibility and almost unquestioning confidence from younger people in their elders.

Although this stereotype does not, I think, correspond exactly to the behaviour or attitudes of any one person, it is not for that

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

reason valueless. It represents the ideal towards which the Lepchas strive and to which they attempt to mould their children, and it is in the deviations from this imposed stereotype that the greater number of psychological difficulties for the Lepchas arise. As such it has preponderating weight in the formation of individual character, and constitutes a point of reference from which deviation can be measured.

Deviations fall into two groups, negative and positive; people may lack some characteristic or qualification called for by the cultural stereotype; or they may manifest characteristics and types of behaviour which exaggerate cultural characteristics, or they may have temperamental qualities definitely opposed to the cultural stereotype. Judged by such rigorous standards there is probably nobody who is not slightly deviant. There are, however, two people in Lingthem, Chala Mandal and Tafoor, in whom I could discern no temperamental cause for psychological discomfort. Both had reasons for a certain distress, but they were external ones; the Mandal was unhappy because he had no son, Tafoor, I think, slightly disappointed because he had neither the wealth nor position of his late father the Muktair. These two people practically embodied the Lepcha ideal, the Mandal for the layman and Tafoor for the lama; Tafoor's household also approached more nearly than any other to the Lepcha ideal.

Owing to the Lepchas' great tolerance of—or rather indifference, to—shades of character, the maladjusted tend to be sociotic[1] rather than neurotic deviants. The only temperament type to which the Lepchas manifest constant opposition is the aggressive and domineering personality; the person who wishes to domineer or to command is constantly thwarted; to paraphrase Saki's epigram, there may be people born to command among the Lepchas, but they never find anybody born to obey them. The most outstanding of these aggressive characters were Tempa, who was described in Chapter Five,[2] and Kurma, whose story is given at length in the next chapter. It is worth noting that these two are also sociotically maladjusted; Tempa is a foreigner from outside Zongu, reared in a mixed community, and living under the slightly humiliating condition of resident son-in-law (*komok myok*); Kurma was adopted by an elderly couple as a little boy, was very unhappy

[1] This term was first used by Dr. Moreno to distinguish socially maladjusted from temperamentally maladjusted people.

[2] See pp. 124–126.

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

in his adopted parents' house, and finally ran away. Besides his aggressive characteristics Kurma shared with Tempa a tendency to boastful lying in an attempt to give himself greater importance than he possessed, and a desire for money for its own sake. Kurma was also unique among the adult Lepchas in getting obviously drunk.

The foreigners, the people not born in Zongu, are the most obviously disturbing elements. Tempa and his sister, Mrs. Jiroong,[3] caused more trouble than all the other inhabitants of Lingthem put together. In his earlier years, too, the first Dorjé Lapoon, who is half Tibetan, caused a very great deal of disturbance.[4]

Owing to the very late psychological maturing of the Lepchas it is difficult to speak with confidence of the characters of most of the men under thirty and of most of the women under twenty. Except where there was strongly marked deviance, such as in the cases of Chélé, and the two girls Prumtu and Kondé,[5] the younger people lived psychologically so much under the shadow of their elders that it was impossible to foresee how they would act when they were independent.

Mrs. Datoop and Lumba's first wife were both rather more independent than the Lepcha ideal type of woman calls for. Lumba's first wife insisted on living in a field-house because, although she got on well with her co-wife and step-children, she disliked living in a crowd and having to bend her wishes to the majority. Mrs. Datoop almost openly ruled her husband and her household; she was far more business-like and managing and practical than is necessary for a Lepcha woman. These qualities, however, did not bring her into conflict with the other Lepchas, for they were developed along lines congruent with the Lepcha culture; her excessive qualities were for the Lepchas good qualities and she held a high place in the general esteem. In a culture in which the temperament rôles of men and women are violently contrasted she would have been severely maladjusted, for she was almost the most 'virile' person (in the Occidental sense of the word) in Lingthem.

Mrs. Tafoor was rather more actively unhappy, for she was a woman of fairly violent temper and aggressively sexed; she was in the unfortunate position of a person who liked a quarrel and who could find nobody to quarrel with. Tafoor used to tease her

[3] See Chapter Five, pp. 140–142.

[4] See Chapter Sixteen, pp. 416–420.

[5] For Chélé see Chapter Six, pp. 164–165; for Prumtu, Chapter Eleven, p. 311; for Kondé, Chapter Twelve, pp. 322–323.

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

157 a lot, but very slyly; thus when in her presence he was explaining
159 to us the way marriage horoscopes are cast he pointed out with considerable emphasis that the books foretold without any question that she would die young, very many years before he did.[4]

The most general excessive quality among the Lepchas, particularly the men, is excessive timidity; thus Chano, Gongyop and his son, Pembu, Jiroong and Nahyeun were all timid to a point where this timidity became an active disability. The Lepcha ideal calls for a very gradual emergence of responsibility, but it does call for it, and these people gave the impression of being permanently fixed in the dependent stage. Thus Pembu, who should have been running his own household, was almost entirely dependent on his mother for advice and help, Jiroong on his wife. Others fall short of the Lepcha ideal personality by lack of intelligence or industry; among these were Katel, Dunbi, Ashyok, and Aga. Of these Dunbi was temperamentally lazy and the other three were foolish and incompetent by the standards of the culture. Tobgé, and to a lesser extent Dadool, exceeded the Lepcha bounds of irresponsibility and licentiousness permitted to young men.

Among the younger men Rigya, who was born in 1915, to a certain extent aided and abetted by his adoptive elder brother Nariya, was unique in being an active miser. He was always shabbily dressed, and unlike all the other Lepchas, never made us presents, though he spent a great deal of time hanging round us, gaping at our possessions, and asking for presents; he had particularly a magpie desire for illustrated papers, and was always asking for pictures of war 'because he had never seen anything like them and was amazed'. He was given quite a number of papers, but one day I told him he could not have any more because other people wanted them. (One of the very few times I saw a
[152] Lepcha boy cry was on one occasion when two mothers each accompanied with sons about eight years old came up for medicine; one of the boys asked for a paper and I gave it to him and went on dressing the cut; the mother of the other child asked rather timidly if I had not a paper for her boy as well, and I then saw this latter holding his mother's hand, with tears streaming down his face; he was crying hard but so quietly that I had not realised it though I was a couple of yards away.) A couple of days after I had refused to give Rigya any more papers he arrived early one morning to repeat his demand, bringing with him as a present the smallest

[4] See Appendix III, b.

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

157 bottle of milk I ever received; he appeared astounded at his own
159 generosity. I asked him whence he had got the milk, for I thought he had no cattle, and then, when I showed that I considered him one of the poorer people of Lingthem, his pride overcame his reticence, and he confided his great secret to me. I do not think that any Lepcha in Lingthem outside his household knew of his secret savings and ambitions. I naturally could not refer to them openly, but I made several hints when talking to other Lepchas; these hints were never taken up.

159 Rigya was the middle son of Ashyok *youmi*, but was given as a child to Ashyok's elder brother, who had only one son, Nariya, ten years older than Rigya, and who seemed unlikely to have another. At that period Nariya's father was the richest man in Lingthem, whereas Ashyok, who had two other sons, was relatively poor. Since the death of Nariya's father, Rigya calls Nariya 'father'. This is the story he told me.

'When I was a baby I didn't distinguish between my adopting parents and my real parents; as soon as I knew who were my real parents I tried to run away to them; but they beat me and sent me back. I love my real parents best, especially my mother; they gave me food and clothes and looked after me; now in my turn I must look after them. But I loved my other mother and father too; they gave me food and rice and meat. Now I love my wife best after my parents, but I used not to.

'When I was a child I was very frightened of devils, especially Tongryong *moong*, who is like a tiger and runs after and kills people. I was also frightened of houses where people had died and of burial places and used to run away from them; indeed I did this till last year, but now I am grown up so I don't run away any longer. Even today I'm frightened of Jamfi *moong* and Mitoor (a dog-shaped devil) when I'm in the forests or high mountains. I'm frightened too of people if I've told them a lie, or said evil about them or done them wrong; but I've never done anything really wrong like sleeping with another man's wife. I've seen a lot of corpses but I've never been frightened of them.

'I didn't sleep with girls when I was young because my father and mother had told me it was very wrong to sleep with other men's wives; they promised me that they would *asék* me as soon as I was big enough. But one day when I was fifteen a girl from Lungdeung came to stop here and she said to me, "Let us sleep together", so I did and I liked it, and we did it again six or seven days later.

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

to monologue, to recount anecdotes, to illustrate a theme by their own past experiences. I soon noticed that Kurma had a particular tendency to do this, and also that he was flattered by my obvious interest in what he had to say. After we had been in fairly continuous contact for about a month I asked him to tell me what he remembered of his childhood. He did so willingly, and thereafter it was easy to bring him back to the subject of his own past life by asking a single leading question. 'What happened after you did so-and-so?' 'What happened to so-and-so?' While he was telling his story I asked practically no questions at all; I kept all queries for subsequent meetings when impersonal subjects would be discussed, when I would interject them without apparent emphasis. Altogether about six full days were passed mainly in the discussion of Kurma's own life; I should undoubtedly have had more material if he had not first been summoned to visit his parents-in-law and on his return been taken ill with fever. Besides these special sessions Kurma would often introduce apposite anecdotes of his own past life, both before and after I had started getting his story.

With Kurma, more than with any other individual in Lingthem we managed to set up a pattern of mutual obligations. As *gyapön* he had been charged by the Mandal to look after us, especially in the matter of getting provisions; he enjoyed the reflected importance of his contact with Europeans, and I flattered him by appealing to him somewhat more often than was necessary. He was anyhow more disposed to talk than to work and was very amenable to cajolery.

I did not like Kurma very much and had not very full confidence in him. I repeatedly tried to trip him up by asking him identical questions at considerable intervals of time, and to check up on him by questioning other people. Actually my distrust was practically unfounded; only on one major point—the death of Banyok—did I find him completely incorrect, and at a later date he voluntarily retracted his first version.

Both through temperament and circumstances Kurma was an a-typical Lepcha. In temperament he had an unusual desire for power, was boastful, and had decided sadistic traits. Sociotically he was unfortunately circumstanced and his treatment of his circumstances was unusual. His mother appears to have been exceptionally poor and his adopting parents exceptionally unkind. Adoption is of itself statistically rare—only eleven people out of the 176 in

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

features, and a good deal too, by imitation, in habit; still he differs from his Tibetan prototype, though not so decidedly as from the Nepalese and Bhutanese, between whom he is hemmed into a narrow tract of mountain country, barely sixty miles in breadth.

"An attentive examination of the Lepcha in one respect entirely contradicts our preconceived notions of a mountaineer, as he is timid, peaceful and no brawler; qualities which are all the more remarkable from contrasting so strongly with those of his neighbours to the east and west: of whom the Gurkhas are brave and warlike to a proverb, and the Bhutanese quarrelsome, cowardly, and cruel (this statement is altogether unfair to the latter and in no way true). A group of Lepchas is exceedingly picturesque. They are of short stature—four feet eight inches to five feet; rather broad in the chest, and with muscular arms, but small hands and slender wrists. The face is broad, flat, and of eminently Tartar character, flat-nosed, oblique-eyed, with no beard, and a little moustache. The lower limbs are powerfully developed, befitting genuine mountaineers: the feet are small. Though never really handsome, and very womanish in the cast of countenance, they have invariably a mild, frank, and even engaging expression, which I have in vain sought to analyse, and which is perhaps due more to the absence of anything unpleasing than to the presence of direct grace or beauty. . . . Indolence, when left to themselves, is their besetting sin; they detest any fixed employment, and their foulness of person and garments renders them disagreeable inmates: in this rainy climate they are supportable out of doors. . . . In disposition they are amiable and obliging, frank, humorous, and polite, without the servility of the Hindoos; and their address is free and unconstrained. Their intercourse with one another and with Europeans is scrupulously honest; a present is divided equally amongst many, without a syllable of discontent or grudging look or word: each, on receiving his share, coming up and giving the donor a brusque bow and thanks. They

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

They have learnt to overcharge already, and use extortion in dealing, as is the custom with the people of the plains; but it is clumsily done, and never accompanied with the grasping air and insufferable whine of the latter.

"A more interesting and attractive companion than the Lepcha I never lived with: cheerful, kind, and patient with a master to whom he is attached; rude but not savage, ignorant and yet intelligent; with a simple resource of a plain knife he makes his house and furnishes yours, with a speed, alacrity, and ingenuity that while away that well-known long hour when the weary pilgrim frets for his couch. In all my dealings with these people they proved scrupulously honest. Except for drunkenness and carelessness I never had to complain of any of the merry troop; some of whom, bare-headed and barelegged, possessing little or nothing save a cotton garment and a long knife, followed me for many months on subsequent occasions, from the scorching plains to the everlasting snows. Ever foremost in the forest or on the bleak mountain, and ever ready to help, to carry, collect or cook, they cheer on the traveller by their unostentatious zeal in his service, and are spurs to his progress."

HOOKER, 1854. A very accurate estimate.

A sentimental Colonel sums up the Lepchas.

"What or wheresoever might have been their original source, the Lepchas here appeared in the most simple, primitive state, living in the midst of the vast, wild, magnificent forests, old as the hills themselves, and, as I think, I mention to you, each family residing by itself, having no villages or communities, and but little intercourse with each other; thus they dwelt in pretty cottages, around which they cultivated their plot of ground. Their religion was particularly simple; they believed in one Good Spirit, and in innumerable evil spirits; to the former they conceived their worship due, and to Him they offered their prayers and thanksgivings; the latter they considered prowled about, and haunted every spot; to them they attributed whatever

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

"I begin with my personal servant Changzhi, whom I have 157
had for twenty-five years. His father was the first servant we engaged on first coming to Kalimpong. In almost every characteristic he was an older edition of the son. He was with us until his death in 1912, when the son, then at the plough, succeeded him. The first characteristic of Changzhi is his honesty and truthfulness. In all these years I have never known him tell a lie to me or take anything that was not his own. I have never kept anything locked up from him, nor in matters of money kept an account of what I have entrusted to him: he did that. He would never take anything for himself without being told by me to do so, and I have known him disobey me in this in cases when he thought it was for my interest to keep something a little longer. I have, of course, known Lepcha servants who could not have been treated in this way; but I believe that Europeans in our district trust the Lepchas generally. If they fail, I believe that it is not infrequently through taking alcoholic liquors. On the other hand, I have known Nepalese domestics who have been quite trustworthy. The failures have been more numerous than among the Lepchas, and here again drink [733]
has been still more frequently the cause. Among the young Nepali men in the towns, it is pathetic how many who had promising futures have been ruined through drink.

"Another characteristic of the Lepchas is their generous 241
and charitable nature: Changzhi shares this to the full. The 574
fact that they lived an isolated life among the forests of the 735
Himalayas before the Nepalese invaded their sanctuary made them interdependent. They were not good farmers and their agricultural implements were primitive. Their dependence upon forest roots and fruits, which were got free by the labour of their hands, encouraged the gospel of sharing; and they share everything. Shortly after we came to India we tried by our 'Young Men's Society' to develop an interest in social questions. One night the subject was debt and the cause of it among the Lepchas. One man said that in his opinion it arose through their stomachs: 'In the

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

the change has been effected nothing can be done to alter it back.

Chodu, more than any other Lepcha I have ever met, conformed in appearance with the popular conception of these people as "Elves of the forest"; but actually his gnome-like appearance was somewhat deceptive. He was so pre-occupied with sex, more even than the average Lepcha, that we had already christened him "the dirty Reverend" before we knew his proper name; and under this title he appears in all my notes. When he found that we were fond of flowers he used often to bring in great armfuls of purple *Dendrobium* orchids, flowers that in England would have cost at least a shilling for a single bloom; and on these occasions our otherwise severely simple living-room would assume the appearance of a popular actress's dressing-room. His duties as a Ka-Ne brought him almost daily to the monastery, when he would come tiptoeing into the bedroom to change the water on the altar. A very likeable person and full of fun.

* * * * *

The *Chötembu*, who was otherwise known as Lumbar, was fifty-two. Grey-haired and jolly, his rather peculiar goitre gave the impression of a roll of fat all round his neck. His origin was somewhat obscure, for he appears to have been what our interpreter described as the "blasted son" of a Tibetan. He can neither read nor write, and says he has never exercised his prerogative to beat his fellows. His first wife, now forty-seven, is a daughter of Pom-Ri, now the wife of the second Dorje Lopön. After ten years of married life his wife, since she had borne him no child, urged him to marry again; this he did, and although his second wife has given him two children he still remains faithful to the first. The two women live in separate houses, but there is no question of their not getting on together. The first lives alone in a cattle-shed because she likes to get away by herself at times, and finds it irksome to be always in a house full of people and noise. Chötembu divides his time between the

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

159 strange woman came to see his mother. She was carrying
[415] some water in a long bamboo, which she put down against
the fence. She talked a lot to Karma's mother and asked her
[597] if she could adopt him. At first she would not agree; but later
on she said that he could go provided he went of his own free
will. The strange woman then called him aside: "I will take
you home with me;" she said, "at my home we have lots of
rice and meat; and if you come and live with me I will give
them to you. Come, let us go! After you have eaten you can
then come back to your mother." Karma did not like the
idea of leaving home, but the thought of food was more than
he could resist. He went away with his adopting mother; but
when they reached home she gave him only a plate of rice;
and no meat. He now discovered that he was to live with this
new strange woman; and when he told her that he wanted to
go back to his mother she tried to frighten him by saying that
if he did so he would certainly meet Sangrong Mung, which
would eat him up.

[157] Now he grew bigger and bigger. Once he dreamt that he
861 was urinating; he was doing it in a special way, only a very
159 little at a time. In the morning when he awoke he found that
his bed was wet; even his legs were damp. His adopting
mother threw the wet sheet at his head and also beat him;
then she rubbed his body with the dirty wet cloth.

In the day-time his adopting parents generally went to work in the fields and he was left alone in the house. Sometimes he would steal the eggs. He never ate them, but used to break them and then fry them on hot stones. One day his parents found the mess and beat him. Whenever he thought he had done anything which would bring him a beating he would run away and hide in the forest and not return before nightfall. Often he was afraid to enter the house and would spend the whole night lying in the filth beneath it. But his parents soon got to know about this; and whenever they found anything wrong, without saying anything about it, they would come and beat him straight away. One day he was playing beside his adopting father, who was sitting on

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

Karma and his wife continued to live with Gongyop for several more years; but on the death of the former's step-father they went to live with his mother. His wife died in 1932, and his mother the following year. He soon married again, and his second wife bore him two children, the first of which died shortly after birth. Six months after the birth of the second child his wife died; and it is her mother who at present keeps house for him. Last year he was again betrothed and hopes to be married next year. In the meantime his future bride already has a baby seven months old. Karma believes in "Bloomsbury" morals; for he lived with his first wife for six years before he troubled to marry her; and when he finally decided to regularise his position he even went to the trouble of carrying out all the preliminary formalities, including a formal betrothal. He never thought it necessary to be faithful to any of his wives, and believes he is the father of at least two bastards. Of all our informants he was the most forthcoming and particularly enjoyed talking about himself. He was much more arrogant than the average Lepcha, and would probably have fitted better into a somewhat more forceful society. Had the army been open to him as a profession he would quickly have become a non-commissioned officer; for above all things he liked to order others about. For this reason he enjoys his post of Karbari, and I imagine will be far less happy when he has to obey orders rather than give them himself. The others think he is proud and a boaster, but say that he always speaks the truth. He is the type that in an European culture would be found standing at the street corner, hands in pockets, with a cigarette drooping from his lips. He would quickly degenerate if he ever lived in a town, and might easily take to a life of crime. I never liked him very much, but of all the Lingtem people he was easily the most useful.

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The Hlaribu does not live in Lingtem; but since he is an active member of the local monastery and appears in many

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

CHAPTER 9

Agriculture and Kindred Subjects

THE main crops in Lingtem are rice (grown both "dry" and "wet," the latter in terraced fields), millet, buckwheat, maize, and barley. The method of growing rice under water in terraced fields, which the Nepali has brought to a fine art, was apparently only introduced into Lingtem some twenty years ago, although Hooker mentions it as being commonly employed in other parts of Sikkim, which he visited as long ago as 1848.

Most Lepchas seem to think that rice grown in terraces is somewhat sweeter to the taste; but that rice grown dry is more nourishing. To me, and I imagine to most Europeans, one kind of rice tastes much the same as another: but people who have made this crop their staple diet are as critical of the various brands as a sunbaked colonel is of his port. But whether dry rice is actually more nourishing is at least open to doubt: what, however, is certain is that the construction of terraces for growing rice under water entails very considerable labour; and I imagine that the Lepcha's natural indolence has led him to prefer the dry variety.

Such terraced fields as there were in Lingtem were badly kept and inefficiently constructed. It would be perfectly easy, as my Nepali servant constantly pointed out, to increase the yield considerably. The point is, however, that the present arrangement gives the Lepcha all he wants to eat. Beyond this he is not interested, for the idea of personal wealth is here not greatly esteemed. From one point of view this is, of course, a most desirable state of affairs. I fear, however, that in the case of the Lepchas it comes more from his indolent habits that from any innate socialist feeling, although this is not entirely absent. There is no doubt, to

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

my mind, that Nepali settlers would increase the yield of this extremely fertile land threefold; but they would do it to their own individual advantage. But if the Nepali, why not the Lepcha? The Lingtem people were always complaining that they could not afford an iron roof for the monastery. I should personally regret to see the present thatch removed; but that is for purely æsthetic reasons. A roof of corrugated iron would doubtless be more efficient, and if the people really want one, to say nothing of schools and other desiderata, it would be perfectly possible for them, by means of better agricultural methods, to raise the necessary funds. As at present constituted they have in their social structure all the makings of the perfect socialist state; but they have, of course, no leaders. What they require is a missionary; a non-religious missionary, that is; someone of the type that has obtained such remarkable results amongst the one-time ignorant peasants of Russia.

Jongu is now protected for the Lepchas and is to all intents and purposes an ethnological museum. Since it is a museum it may just as well be a good one; and the improvement of the people's condition, in which I would include sufficient education to free them from the thraldom of gods and demons, would form an unique opportunity for some educated Lepcha. There are many such in the Kalimpong district, where education has been long available; but removed from their natural environment Lepchas are forced to suppress their more altruistic characteristics in the general struggle for existence. In a district which cannot absorb even a fraction of its educated population this state of affairs is inevitable; at any rate until such time as manual work is no longer considered to be unsuited to the dignity of the so-called educated classes. In the meantime here is a chance for some public-spirited Lepcha; someone who still has some regard for the better qualities of the tribe to which he belongs. If the Jongu people remain as at present their total extinction as a separate tribe is only a matter of a few more generations. This, in view of their many admirable qualities,

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

853 mother must take care not to go out in the sun, nor should
757 she sit down in any damp place. She should also give up eating salt and meat for the time being and it is better if she takes no *chi*. A diet consisting solely of rice and butter is considered the best at such a time.

856 There is nothing a mother can do to help her baby over the teething period, but it is considered better at such a time not to feed the child on frogs' or bears' flesh, or it will not talk until very late. The teeth should start to appear when the child is eight months old and should be complete by the end of the twelfth month; but if the child is seen by a pregnant woman its teeth will not appear until after that woman's child is born. For this reason pregnant women always take care not to look at other people's babies. The
[777 lower teeth of a boy should appear before the upper or the
842] child's luck will not be good: moreover, if the first child is a boy and its upper teeth appear first it means that the next child will be a girl. With girls the reverse applies; and in
[787] cases where their upper teeth do not appear first it means that in later life they will have trouble with domestic animals, and are likely to lose their husbands soon after marriage. Nothing can be done in cases of this sort, and parents generally conceal the fact that their children's teeth have appeared in the wrong order. It is a bad sign if a child of either sex has pointed milk-teeth in the lower jaw: this is a sure sign that the child will be naughty and disobedient.

856 A child is thought to become either "naughty" or "good"
577 at about the age of five or six; but its character is not finally
865 formed until about fifteen, or, in the case of a girl, not until
157 she gives birth to her first child. A "naughty" child is one who is unfriendly, who hits people, quarrels with its friends and throws stones at them; but the worst characteristic of "bad" children is that they will not co-operate with others. The domineering and strong-willed child with a mind of its own, which is looked upon with favour in our culture, would be quite out of place in Lepcha society, and would be definitely branded as "naughty." This is an excellent

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

example of the conditioning of social personality. In a culture such as our own, in which "success" can only be obtained at the expense of others, it is obviously desirable to encourage the growing child's more aggressive characteristics, at the same time suppressing its gentler traits. In Lepcha society the reverse is the case: the domineering and aggressive type who is unable to co-operate with others is definitely out of place and cannot fit comfortably into the pattern of Lepcha village life. Looked at from our point of view, the Lepcha child is a milk-sop, the very antithesis of the "public-school" type; but the conditioning given the child from its early years produces the type of person that is best able to fit into Lepcha village life as originally constituted. It may not be, and in fact is not, the ideal type if the culture is to survive, for we have already seen that it is only by keeping the Jongu area as a Lepcha reserve that the tribe has escaped complete disintegration, by reason of its contact with the aggressive and materialistic Gurkhas. This is not to say, however, that the type is itself undesirable. It is, as a matter of fact, in many ways admirable; but it cannot survive when surrounded by people of more materialist cultures; and a certain amount of contact with the outside world is inevitable.

Few children are so "bad" that they cannot be improved with training. The ordinary child is naturally "good," and only becomes "bad" when spoilt by its parents, the spoiling taking the form of loving the child too much. If a "bad" child is not trained by the time it is nine or ten it will become uncontrollable, and it is thought that in such cases the only remedy is to send it away from home, preferably to be trained as a Lama. There were three such children in Lingtem; but their parents had regretfully to admit that the training had not improved them! Parents do not seem to co-operate much in the training of their children, and if either scolds the child the other invariably takes its part, so that, in the long run, the child generally gets its own way.

When a baby cries its parents will say, "See this pretty

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

them. Lamas, like the priests of all other religions, are sometimes charlatans; but in Tibet, and also in other parts of Sikkim, I have met many who impressed me with their sincerity and saintliness. Even one such could do a great deal of good in Jongu.

Whether the Lepchas are worth preserving in their present state is a question I will not presume to answer. But in any case it is one that will probably answer itself during the course of the next few generations. All I can say is that I found them a cheerful and very charming people, and that I personally should be sorry to see them disappear.

In closing this letter, which is overlong already, I should like to take the opportunity of thanking Your Highness for all the help you have given me, and especially for permitting me to work uninterruptedly in Jongu.

Yours sincerely,

C.J.M.

October, 1937.

7: Hooker D-5 (1849-1851) 1854
AK5 Lepcha AK5

157 An attentive examination of the Lepcha in one respect entirely contradicts our preconceived notions of a mountaineer, as he is timid, peaceful, and no brawler; qualities which are all the more remarkable from contrasting so strongly with those of his neighbours to the east and west: of whom the Ghorkas are brave and warlike to a proverb, and the Bhotanese quarrelsome, cowardly, and cruel. A 112 group of Lepchas is exceedingly picturesque. They are of short stature—four feet eight inches to five feet—rather broad in the chest, and with muscular arms, but small hands and slender wrists.* The face is broad, flat, and of eminently Tartar character, flat-nosed and oblique-eyed, with no beard, and little moustache; the complexion is sallow, or often a clear olive; the hair is collected into an immense tail, plaited flat or round. The lower limbs are powerfully developed, befitting genuine mountaineers: the feet are small. Though never really handsome, and very womanish in the cast of countenance, they have invariably a mild, frank, and even engaging expression, which I have in vain sought to analyse, and which is perhaps due more to the absence of anything unpleasing, than to the presence of direct grace or beauty. In like manner, the girls are often very engaging to look upon, though without one good feature: they are all smiles and good-nature; and the children are frank, lively, laughing urchins. The old women are thorough hags. Indolence, when left to themselves, is 181 their besetting sin; they detest any fixed employment, and their foulness of person and garments renders them disagreeable inmates: in this rainy climate they are 088 supportable out of doors. Though fond of bathing when

[441] * I have seldom been able to insert my own wrist (which is smaller than the average) into the wooden guard which the Lepcha wears on his left, as a protection against the bow-string: it is a curved ring of wood with an opening at one side, through which, by a little stretching, the wrist is inserted.